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ABSTRACT

The capacity of American institutions to preserve and convey basic values to new generations has substantially diminished, suggests this former U.S. Senator from Oregon. His opinion is that the small private college can help create a moral and spiritual climate in society. The range of topics discussed includes: college preservation of values; campus values; mutual acceptance and caring; and some failings of the American system. Selected questions and answers that followed the speech are included. (LBH)

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NEWSLETTER *Supplements, 1976-77*

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# The Role of the Small Private College in Creating A Moral, Spiritual Climate in American Society

***MARK HATFIELD***

Benjamin Franklin told a story in his *Autobiography* which illustrates the value decisions that we all face, in all times, in all societies. When Franklin was a boy of seven, some of his friends gave him some money with which he bought a toy whistle. When he got home, his older brothers and sisters chided him for the poor use he had made of the money, pointing out the many other things he could have purchased that would have brought him more satisfaction and been of lasting importance. In part, Franklin used this story on many occasions in his speeches and writings to illustrate the need for thrift as in the spirit of *Poor Richard's Almanac*. He also used it as a parable of unwise value decisions. He spoke of one who often, in fact, gave up his virtue, his friends, his free time, all in order to try to win the favor of public officials. He spoke of others, in light of this parable, who neglect their own affairs in a vain search for popularity and political gain. And occasionally, he used it as an example and parable for those who give up the pleasure of helping others, the esteem of fellow citizens, and the joys of human friendship for the sake of accumulating wealth. Franklin, you see, was more than a moralizer. His story on the whistle illustrates a profound truth. As told many times, his regret at buying a whistle was that he had bought a finite resource.

**Consideration of College Value Systems**

Now some would like to pretend today that we, as individuals and as a society, need not give consideration to values; that our time and our resources are finite and thus force us to make selections on the basis of some type of value system. (You see, even the absence of a conscious value system is a value system.) I would suggest that you might think more deeply about the values which give direction to your individual colleges and to the lives that you represent as college administrators. Your values have everything to do with your selection among the infinite resources with which you have to work. Small colleges have learned painfully during the past few years that the supply of potential students, federal grants, state assistance, and private contributions are limited. In order to obtain a sufficient share of these to survive, serious value decisions must be made. The range of courses and majors offered, the quality of students that you admit, the type of faculty you offer, and, indeed, the very objectives toward which you proceed say a great deal about your institutional values.

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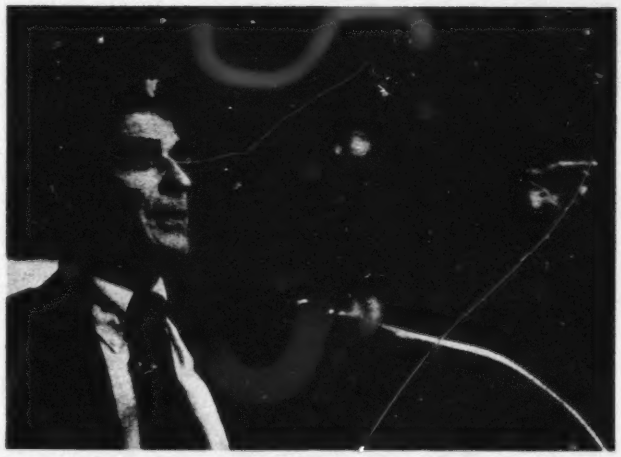

As we look at our American society broadly, I think you would agree that we are losing much of what traditionally has been a consensus of values. Our cohesion as a society in the past has reflected a substantial core of what we call shared values.

First was simply a belief in God—a transcendent dimension of life—and, for the most part, we have even narrowed that down to something more specific. We have talked about a personal God as revealed in Christ without, I might hasten to add, ascribing to this nation the myth that we are a Christian nation. Second, there has been a common respect for the individual, his or her very life and freedom to pursue happiness and success as he or she sees it. And thirdly, there has been a commitment to community, to a sense of community which the sociologists tell us today is the greatest void in American society. This historic sense of community is expressed in a shared commitment to contribute to and benefit from various groups—the family, the neighborhood, the school, the church, and numerous voluntary associations.

**Preservation of Values Has Diminished**

The capacity of our institutions to preserve and convey our basic values to new generations has substantially diminished. There are numerous statistics which give evidence of the declining stability of the family and its decreased effectiveness as a transmitter of values. Schools have been increasingly dominated by a psuedo-scientific philosophy which asserts that values have no place in the classroom. As for government, all opinion polls point to and indicate a diminishing confidence in our political structures.

Where does the church fit in as a conveyor of values today? In answer, I would call to mind a passage from *Huckleberry Finn* in which Huck is washed up on the shores of Arkansas,

right in the middle of a feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons. A family feud, as you recall, was something new to Huck Finn but it seemed to be harmless enough, since the two families were able to attend church together. Huck described one Sunday in particular, and I quote:

"It was a pretty ordinary preaching, all about brotherly love and such like tiresomeness, but everybody said it was a good sermon and they all talked it over going home and had such a powerful lot to say about faith and good works and free grace, and preforeordestination, and I don't know what all, but it did seem to me one of the roughest Sundays I had run across yet."

You see, regretably, the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons killed each other off the following week, ending the feud in the only way they knew how. As you may recall, Mark Twain as a writer, was a rather harsh and noted critic of the church, but I'm afraid he would find even more to say about today's compartmentalization of values.

This lack of consistency among our values and the separation of our values from our conduct has been noted by many even outside the literary field. One Harvard sociologist, Daniel Bell, said the typical middle class person holds to the ideal of rationalism, efficiency, and prudence in his business of possessions and his professions. But in private life, and particularly in the patterns of consumption, his values are those of self-fulfillment, hedonism, and irrationalism.

In Bell's view, the missing ingredient that provides consistency to values is what has been called the Puritan ethic. The Puritans encouraged the pursuit of material things for the fulfillment of needs and not just for pleasure. Self-absorption and self-fulfillment were to be tempered by one's commitment to community. Bell's solution to the disjointedness of our society is the recovery of some common philosophy with a religious faith as one of its components. This is not a theologian speaking; this is a sociologist. As a former political scientist, I know that whenever a sociologist gets a good idea it is really worth listening to!

**The Values Apparent in Our Actions**

Wrapped up in the problem of the erosion of our agreement upon values is the question, "Are we really satisfied with the values which are apparent in our actions?" In some respects there are overt values which need to be challenged or need to be more related to more basic values. For example, we place a high value upon human life and the right to exist apart from suffering and starvation. Yet, we corporately continue to pursue objectives of American military power in the world which may contribute to instability and which rob us of the resources needed for our humanitarian efforts and programs. The declining value attached to human life is evidenced by the constant violence within our own society, where there are some seventy suicides every day.

Some of the issues involving values in our society are less open and less obvious. The British economist, E. F. Schumacher, has helped us to discern the real human values involved in the modern industrialization process. He maintains that the modernized nations have organized their societies as systems of production, guided by the values of efficiency, productivity, and minimum personal effort. The human values of personal fulfillment, enjoyment of work, social relationships, and compassion are sacrificed with this new industrial ethic. In Schumacher's opinion, the methods of organizing economic and social pursuits should be measured by what they do for each person as a child of God, a social being and an individual with skills and needs.

One of the challenging things about dealing with values is the constantly changing issues to which they must be applied. Ten years ago, for instance, not many people outside of the medical or academic field, would have recognized the word "euthanasia." The medical technology that keeps people's bodies alive beyond the functioning of the brain is relatively recent. Also, the research of combining DNA molecules to produce new types of life has only recently generated a base in the scientific community. All of these relate to the very old question: What is human life and what value do we attach to it? For example, we have even permitted our courts to make this determination of what is life and when does life begin, rather than the medical and scientific fields upon which we have traditionally relied, because we want easy abortion laws.

**Values on Campus**

Part of the adventure of the human journey is the opportunity to apply old principles to new problems. As educators, involved specifically in the operation of small colleges you hardly need to be persuaded that the mission of your colleges involves values in a multitude of ways. Many of you are involved in institutions which were established on the basis of religious values. There is implicit in the very existence of a small college that a commitment toward each person is important. This represents a human value. You're giving your maximum interest and focus to the individual, the optimum interaction with professors, and the cultivation of community spirit.

Numerous colleges have taken significant steps toward creating a climate for learning values. For example, by 1978, all seniors at Notre Dame will be required to enroll in a seminar relating ethical questions to their various disciplines. Other schools are developing interdisciplinary and value-oriented approaches to various courses of study. David Le Shana is doing a very exciting program at George Fox College in this very area. The focus on values is reaching beyond the traditional domain of philosophy, ethics, and theology to find its rightful place in such fields as engineering, medicine, and business. Many of you will remember Dr. Van Der Verboosch who said in his book that he felt the laboratories representing the great discipline of science have too long ignored the kind of world in which scientific discoveries are being placed. In one sense these developments affect your business as educators since they involve changes in curriculum and other such matters of logistics in your schools.

Our society cannot leave it to a few institutions and academic centers to update and pass along our values. Those of us whose daily task involves public policy have every reason to care about the emphasis on values in education. Some have asked the question, "Can values be taught?" Before we develop units and courses and majors in "Values" we had better answer that question. And the objectives of a small college, I'm sure, include some commitment to passing along values. But you need to know whether this indeed can and does take place. A local columnist recently printed a letter in *The Washington Post* in response to a column he had written about a cab driver here in Washington, D. C. who had returned a purse left in his cab. In this purse there were money and jewels worth about $42,000. Apparently the cabbie did not spend a great deal of time debating the morality of returning or keeping the money. A person from Chevy Chase, Maryland, gave thoughts on whether such "knee-jerk" honesty can be taught by writing these words:

"It isn't the lecture or the punishment that stays with the child forever. It is the spontaneous look of shock or grief or surprise that flashes over the adult's face when the child trans-

gresses. You can only pass on what you have and what you are, not what you wish someone else to have or be."

In looking back over my own years on the campus of a small college, I would say that if any students were helped in developing their own values it was in similar ways. As a political scientist I could have lectured on values in American political institutions. As a dean of students I could have conducted seminars on developing values while in college. It really was through the one-to-one sharing of experiences, however, that the greatest amount was accomplished in the lives of these students, according to the feedback we received. We had a policy of no smoking on campus. Since we were an urban campus, everybody walked out to the curb between classes and lined up on the curb to smoke. I was a smoker at that time and I did my best counseling on the curb, having a cigarette between classes.

Out of that relationship others developed, based on the one-to-one. I found that values could not be imposed upon other people. We had a high degree of legalism on our campus. But I'm sure that many of those rules and regulations were known more by their breach than by their observance. Only as we began to develop and sense a spiritual life on our campus did we find those students accepting for themselves (not imposed on them by the administration) the values that they had found in their spiritual relationship that grew up within their lives. There is a mutuality in the process. I had to be willing to be vulnerable myself, as the dean, to have my own values exposed to examination, challenged, and questioned. If you will permit me this personal expression, it was only in the surrender of myself to a source of values that I discovered a personal faith in Christ and felt that I was really beginning to be equipped to help students.

**Mutual Acceptance and Caring**

Education, if it is worthy of the name, must take place in the context of the mutual acceptance and caring, so vital to us all. Here in Washington there is a marvelous fellowship of Christian believers called The Church of the Saviour. One of their major emphases is the concept of mission, that the believer finds his fulfillment and growth in a specific ministry and outreach. The members are organized in mission groups for various tasks from housing rehabilitation in the ghetto, to operating a coffee house, to fellowship with public officials. One of these mission groups, called "Literacy Action," is comprised of 50 to 60 members who volunteer their evenings to tutor teenagers and adults who cannot read well enough to function in life.

The sad truth is that universal education has not resulted in universal literacy in our country. This, in turn, correlates with all kinds of social problems. We find that 80 percent of the prisoners in our jails today have little or no ability to read. The people of The Church of the Saviour have plunged into the task of meeting the needs and are succeeding. The directors of the Right to Read program in Washington, D. C., call this one of the best volunteer reading programs in the area. Their success is very simple. They care deeply about these people. It is this support and compassion which overcomes the inhibitions and the barriers of those who cannot read. I leave it to you to apply that to your own campuses, populated as they are with students also inhibited by barriers of various kinds – if we but knew.

If a student cannot find acceptance and a bonified community on the small college campus, where can he find it? An editor recently asked a young man why he had become a part of The Unification Church of Reverend Sun Myung Moon. He said, "Because of the way the country is; the people are disjointed." In other words, this and other such cults are finding many of their followers among those who have looked for community and for hope on the campuses, in their families, in their churches, and in their neighborhoods and have not always found it. I hope all of you are as concerned about this and other movements as some of us are here in Washington.

**Some Failings of American Society**

Those who have studied the pattern of suicides in our country have discovered that it is the young from the middle and upper income and well-educated families who increasingly are taking their lives. Experts tell us that the cause centers upon the feelings of loneliness and isolation and the lack of meaningful social relationships. The great historian, Francis Parkman, made some very helpful observations about the failings of American society in his lifetime. He was troubled by the excessive pursuit of material things and what he felt was a shallow educational process. He could as well have been speaking in 1976 when he said, "Our material growth so greatly exceeds our other growth that the body politic suffers from the disease of repletion." Now the companion problem, he said, was an education system which "produces an excess of self-confidence. One of its results in this country is a prodigious number of persons who think and persuade others to think, that they know everything necessary to be known, and are fully competent to make speeches upon all questions, whatever." If Parkman was disturbed about nineteenth century American life, he would be horrified by The Age of Television. The TV newsman who gives only the headlines, the TV entertainer whose only measure of quality is the ratings, the TV politician whose credentials are appearance, charisma and quick answers all would shock him. Parkman's remedy was in restoring the function of education "not to stuffing the mind with crude aggregations of imperfect knowledge, but rather to the development of its powers of observation, comparison, analysis and reasoning; to strengthening and instructing its moral sense and leading it to self-knowledge and consequent modesty." Parkman went on to conclude, "He who gives or bequeaths money to a well established and wisely conducted university confers a blessing which radiates throughout all the ranks of society."

Let me underline his phrases *well established* and *wisely conducted*. It is not a question of liberal arts versus career education, for both must find their place in a small college. It is neither a plea to stick with the proven methods nor to rush into adopting the latest educational fad. It is more a question of what happens within our structures and curricula and modes of operation.

Father Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame, has observed that students are exposed to values constantly – universal values, professional values and personal values. "Teaching values is the hardest thing in the world," he says but this task is "central to all that is liberalizing in liberal education." And so if you who are the leaders, you who are the ones representing whatever heritage your campus represents and you cannot live your life in such a way as to convey the nonverbal expression of values, to whom will the world look? I learned it from my students. This reminds me of what John Wesley once said, "If I'm drowning I'd rather be saved by a burglar who could swim, than by a bishop who couldn't." And so we might ask ourselves whether or not we are exemplifying that which we call the great value system of whatever we identify as a value system.

I had the privilege of speaking at the Commencement at George Washington University here in Washington, D.C., a few weeks ago, and I took for my thesis "Education: The Search for Information to Irrelevant Questions." I hope that

our search for information is really a search for relevancy of these problems that young people face and we as a society face today. Being involved in a culture where there is so much evidence of the lack of values, or at least their application, we need to bolster up. We need to become infectious and contagious to the total society from the centers of spiritual power for the real power of this nation, or of any nation, is its spiritual leadership and that is the part which you play, in honing it to a fine point of understanding and meaning in the lives of the students as you lead on your campuses.

# SELECTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*1. What is the most difficult ethical question you have had to face in the current session of Congress?*

I would say that the most difficult question I have had to face in any session of Congress, whether this one or the previous sessions, is basically what might be called retaining an intellectual integrity. We have reduced the idea of ethics and integrity to reflect our most important value in our society, which is our materialistic value. We say the politician is honest if he doesn't steal money from the public treasury or if he is not caught with his hand in the till. We tend to think of whether he is accepting bribes or not. I know that most frequently in talking to student groups that tends to be the way they ask the question, "What is an honest politician?" Actually, I think that is the easiest way to retain or to maintain one's honesty.

First of all, we don't deal directly with money in that strict sense of the word, but I do think there is a tremendous problem of maintaining an intellectual integrity. It's so easy to play the political prostitute and it goes like this. One has studied an issue, and knows it's going to be a controversial issue. One feels committed to a certain position on that issue by the merits of the arguments and the input of the debate and the hearing. Then one's advisors collect around him and say, "now if you vote this way, these are the groups you will alienate; if you vote that way, these are the groups you will alienate." So they begin to weigh which group you alienate and how many are in each group and therefore, who do you alienate the least so you can get re-elected. Now that is what I call the beginning of political prostitution where you begin to bid out to what seems to be the most important in future votes, rather than the issue, rather than what you really believe in your heart and mind.

*2. If you were given the task to evaluate values on a college campus, how would you do this?*

I really don't know. I don't think one can do it strictly with objective measurements, studies, or surveys. I want to say this to you and it sounds like a totally anti-intellectual approach. I think I can spend an hour on a campus today and tell pretty well what the spirit of that campus is, what its major thrust and values are. I visit many campuses each year—hundreds of them in the last 10 or 12 years. I think that you can talk to faculty, students, townspeople, alumni, service personnel, the cafeteria worker and the janitor in the dormitory. You can get that kind of cross section of people and just sit down and talk to them about how they view the students, how the students view themselves, how the faculty view the students and the students view the faculty, and so forth. I am not sure that this is one of those Stanford-Binet kinds of tests that you can put out on a chart but I do think that if you are sensitive to people and are open to people that you can do this.

I have seen campuses, for example, where I'm going to lecture and there is a committee of students at the plane. The first thing they start doing is apologizing about their campus. Downgrading the institution—whether it is the president, another student, or the grounds—gives me a clue very quickly. Another group will meet you with an organized schedule and proceed to tell you a little about the campus, maybe a little more than you know or more than you have heard. They start off on a positive note. I'm not talking about being a supersalesman, but I'm talking about an attitude. I also feel that there is a certain factor in the appearance of the campus. It is a very small thing, but it does indicate the kind of logistics and support that a campus has from its building and grounds right on to its faculty, administration, students, and alumni.

*3. What would you say is the role of the small college in taking human values and using old principles with new problems given the fact that our world is changing so rapidly?*

You have really propounded a number of points in that one question. What comes to me loud and clear is that you are asking basically, "Are we going to be victims or masters of the circumstance?" I think one of the great frustrations today is that people increasingly feel they are the victims. They have little real direction in their lives, and they have little influence over the future of their lives and the course they should take. I don't believe that it is a matter of the inadequacy of the old values. Now that may not have been the intent of your question, but it came through by implication.

I don't believe that it is a question of the inadequacy of old values. I think it is probably the lack of any value which is in itself a value. What I mean is simply this. We have lived in an ever-accelerating life style and pace. Not only has it been manifest by the mobility of people moving, the collapse of distance from one point of the globe to the other, the constriction of the time of communication, but also that people have little or no time for introspection. I find that I'm victimized by this. More and more of our time is spent in personal case work than in thinking about innovative legislation or overseeing existing legislation.

If we could somehow get a neighborhood government corporation established across this country, then we could reestablish a sense of community with meaning. I certainly do not mean the fraudulent method which is merely taking more of your money to the federal government and then handing it back to you, saying that it is your money. That's fraud, although we call it revenue sharing. We should somehow interdict where your money is kept in the local community and gradually recoup this master role in our lives.

We are so preoccupied with our material life today that we have lost the concept that there is something greater and more powerful. May I illustrate it with the words of John Adams from whom I quote frequently. Adams believed that the American Revolution was not a military experience, but an experience of the mind and the heart of the people. Adams said this is the Revolution when the American colonists coveted one with the other—to new religious sentiments, to new ideals, to new concepts, to new values. We need to rededicate ourselves to these ideas of John Adams. I think we can have another revolution that begins to reform, restructure, reconfigure this society that we seem to be locked in, where we feel the victim rather than the master. That is the spiritual revolution. And it is not the inadequacy of old values, but the non-application of those old values in a current, contemporary world.